

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

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CHAPTER XXXII. IN WHICH THE DIS-
INTERESTEDNESS OF DICK'S LOVE IS
DEMONSTRATED.

It was not until the doctor came that Mrs. Tuck could be persuaded that her husband was dead. Then she retired to lie down for a few hours, and, in these first sleepless hours, her kind heart was much troubled by the thought that she had possibly hastened Mr. Tuck's death by worrying him to make his will. Not until Ida stood by her bed in the morning did the other trouble come to the top in her mind—that the will had not been signed after all.

"I didn't hear about it till now, Mrs. Tuck," said Ida, kissing her twice with unusual demonstrativeness.

"No, dear; I told them not to disturb you."

"I wasn't asleep. I wish you had sent for me if I could have been of use."

And indeed the girl had spent as sleepless and as wretched a night as Mrs. Tuck.

"You could have been of no use, dear; it was so sudden." Then, after a pause, she took Ida's hand in hers, and pressing it caressingly, said: "Ida dear, there is no will."

"You are left nothing?"

"I? Oh, I am left as well off as I should have been by will. It is you who are left nothing, dear."

"Dear Mrs. Tuck, I don't care at all; I had a great deal rather——" Then, remembering that it was not gracious now to hint at the relief she felt at the prospect of a release from her engagement,

she pulled herself up to say earnestly: "I do hope this doesn't add to your distress, Mrs. Tuck."

"I had set my heart on it, dear; but it has gone with the rest. I have been disappointed always in all I've set my heart on—except the best of all," she checked herself to say, making her meaning unmistakable by another pressure of Ida's hand and a look of love into her face. "My dear child, how ill you look!" she then exclaimed, seeing the girl's face fairly for the first time.

"I've a headache; that's all, thank you."

"Ah, it's not the head, dear, I'm afraid," she said, significantly but sympathetically.

Archie now was so hopelessly out of court, that Mrs. Tuck could afford to allude to Ida's disappointment in him without bitterness—with pity even. Besides, she had doubts, and more than doubts, of Dick's fulfilment of his engagement. A man so embarrassed and bankrupt could not, even if he would, marry a penniless girl. Mrs. Tuck, therefore, so far from being disposed to reproach him for breaking off his engagement, dreaded his reproaches for her mismanagement of the whole affair. Indeed, she felt so certain and—in her present nervous state—so fearful of such reproaches, that she avoided the subject with him as long as she could. She feared lest a discussion of it might lead to a breach with her adored nephew, at a moment when she would feel estrangement from him most poignantly.

Dick, on his side, with a becoming and unexpected delicacy, avoided it also. Indeed, he showed a most unlooked-for consideration for his aunt in her trouble. He took upon himself, not only the arrangement of the funeral, but also the settlement of a much more troublesome matter—a summons for assault and battery served

upon Mrs. Tuck by Mrs. Bompas on the very day after the death which that good lady had hastened.

The fact was, Dick was glad of any excuse for escape from the chilling shadow of death, and he therefore found it necessary for the arrangement of these two affairs, not merely to go to Ryecote, but to remain there till the morning of the funeral. In this interval, it must also be said for him, that he attended most sedulously to the settlement of the suit threatened by Mrs. Bompas. He went himself personally and daily to her lodgings, and in her invariable absence condoled with the wistful, trustful, tristful Anastasia on the hapless fate which had given her such a mother and such a lover.

As for his arrangement of the funeral, it didn't need so much time and trouble. Dick simply went to the leading undertaker in the town, and gave him a careless and sumptuous order "to do the thing properly."

The result was embarrassing. The man made his whole establishment weep more profusely than it had ever done before. He pressed into the service not only all the horses which sorrow had marked from their birth by their colour for her own, but others also of indecorous colours, which had not been taught even to prance in the exulting way thought appropriate to funerals. This, however, hardly mattered. These coursers were draped so deeply in black, that no mourner could be pained by their colour, or even by their pace, which was considerably veiled from him, and might have been—for all he could see of their legs—exultant enough for the profoundest grief. But what did matter, was the disproportion between the number of the mourners and of the mourning-coaches. There wasn't half a mourner to each coach.

Fortunately, five of Dick's creditors, having seen the notice of Mr. Tuck's death in the papers, had swooped vultuously down upon The Keep, and had lain in wait then at Kingsford, for Dick's return from Ryecote. These, Dick, after his manner, received as friends come to condole with him, and then proceeded, as a matter of course, and without the moving of a muscle in his face, to array them solemnly with his own hands in scarves, gloves, and hatbands.

"It was kind of you to come unasked, but I have asked no one," he whispered to each in turn, with tears in his voice.

The men, much impressed and relieved to find Dick acting as master of the house, were flattered by this distinction, reassured about the settlement of their claims, and not unmindful that the scarves, etc., were portable property, and that an invitation to lunch must follow.

Indeed, Dick acted the master so well, that the fulsome and officious little undertaker took him for the nephew about whom the Ryecote papers were making such a stir.

"You're the image of your poor uncle, my dear sir, and a finer corpse I've never seen—of the kind, of the kind," feeling the description too outrageous without this specific limitation.

Dick's disgust at being likened to a corpse, and that the corpse of Mr. Tuck, may be conceived. It made him very peremptory with the obsequious Mr. Powse, and so confirmed the conviction of the creditors that he was master of the house as well as of the ceremonies.

"Be good enough to see these gentlemen into the carriages, Mr. Powse," he said sharply; "one in each coach."

For there was a coach for each, and it was at once more judicious and more overpowering to keep them apart in solitary state. Thus one after the other of the confounded creditors was led forth in solemn state and shut by himself into an immense mourning-coach. One walked as in a dream, looking from his pepper-and-salt trousers to his sable scarf, and back again, as though trying to decide which was the reality. Another charged his face with an expression of hopeless desolation, as the most fitting acknowledgment of the honour done him; while a third was in such irrepressible glee at the prospect of being paid promptly, and in full, that he was facetious with a red-nosed mute, asking him, with a wink, if the liquid business wasn't more in his line than the mute business.

"Who are those gentlemen?" asked Sir Arthur—who had returned—as he seated himself with Dick in the chief mourner's carriage.

"How should I know?" growled Dick petulantly, not yet recovered from his irritation at having been likened to Mr. Tuck's corpse.

"You seemed to know them, I thought," for Dick certainly had been effusive in his reception of them.

"I owe them money, if you mean that; but I suppose I'm not expected to know the name of everyone I owe sixpence to."

"Duns! By Jove!" exclaimed Sir Arthur in amazement and admiration.

"I didn't know what else to do either with them, or with all the coaches that swindling undertaker sent," said Dick, restored to good-humour by Sir Arthur's admiration.

Sir Arthur rubbed his hands together delightedly.

"A mourning-coach is the best place for such carrion crows—eh?" forgetting he was himself of the breed.

"Next best to a hearse," replied Dick, not forgetting it.

"Trust a hooked nose for smelling carrion a hundred miles off. I hope you told 'em to keep their shoes on and their hats off in church," cried Sir Arthur with clumsy raillery, proudly conscious of the distinction of race between himself and the other harpies. But his wit was lost upon Dick, who was plunged in thought—not of his creditors, with whom he hoped to deal without difficulty, but of Ida.

On their return from the funeral Dick asked his flattered guests to walk round the grounds with him till lunch-time. During the walk he repeatedly consulted Sir Arthur upon the improvements he meditated making, not in the grounds and gardens only, but in the house itself. He spoke of "throwing out a wing," as though it could be done with a birdlike celerity and ease, and of "bringing a frontage a foot or two farther forward," as if the improvement could be effected by a push. Upon the stables he was especially severe. They were hardly fit to house an Irish tenant, not to say a horse. He hoped, however, when next the gentlemen did him the honour to visit him, to have no cause for the shame he felt now in showing them the out-buildings.

When they came to the pigsties Dick took polite pains to explain to his Jewish friends the plan of a row of model pigsties he had seen when on a visit with the Earl of Horbury, and recommended them by all means to do, what he meant at once to do—to re-construct their pigsties upon this admirable model.

Having pressed upon them this piece of golden advice with extraordinary earnestness, Dick led the way back to the house, where he entertained them with a sumptuous luncheon, and, when it was over, took leave of them apologetically.

"There were urgent family affairs to be attended to, as they would well understand. But Sir Arthur Denzil would be

kind enough to take his place, and show them into the billiard-room if they cared to smoke."

Then Sir Arthur took them in hand, speaking to them upon the only subject they had in common—their host. He knew no man who better deserved his good fortune.

His good fortune? What was his good fortune? naturally and eagerly asked the creditors with one voice.

Sir Arthur was surprised that they hadn't heard of his engagement to Miss Luard, who came in for the property—four thousand pounds a year at least. The marriage must, of course, be postponed, but not, he thought, for many months.

Thus the duns departed rejoicing. "There was flesh on their debtor's bones yet." With his extravagant notions of improvements, etc., he would need their help in running through four thousand pounds a year at the pace he contemplated.

Dick having thus got his duns off his hands, joined Mrs. Tuck, and candidly explained to her their attendance as mourners. Poor Mrs. Tuck was too deeply distressed and unnerved to smile, for now the dreaded moment of Dick's reproaches was upon her.

"I did what I could, Dick," she said deprecatingly. "But nothing would induce him to make a will till that woman horrified him into it—too late."

"Of course you did what you could, my dear aunt," he answered cheerily. "It can't be helped; and it couldn't have been helped either."

Great were his aunt's relief and surprise at being thus cheerfully exonerated; and great, too, was her admiration of Dick's magnanimity.

"I've been more unhappy about it than I can say, Dick; and it's the greatest comfort to me to know that you don't think me to blame."

"How could I, aunt? I cannot thank you enough for doing all you did."

"Ah, Dick, I'm afraid I've only deepened your difficulties. But if, out of my small means, I can help you at all—" she began impulsively, eager to make an adequate response to his generosity.

"Nonsense, my dear aunt; you've little enough left for yourself. I must get white-washed and start afresh, that's all. Do you think Ida will mind?" anxiously.

"Will mind being left nothing, do you mean?"

"Oh no; she's not the kind of girl to

care much about that. Will she mind my being made a bankrupt, I mean?"

"She'll be very sorry, of course."

"It won't affect our engagement?" hesitatingly, yet eagerly.

"Your engagement!" cried his aunt, more and more amazed. "But what have you to live on?"

"I can get an adjutantcy, or some appointment of that kind, through Lord Dewhurst. He has more than once suggested something of the sort to me."

"I'm afraid, Dick——"

"Aunt, don't ask me to give up Ida—I cannot do it. I can resign myself to the loss of everything else, but not of her."

This, Dick! What a depth of devotion lay unsuspected beneath this cynical surface!

"My dear Dick, you surprise me. I never thought you cared so much for her."

"I didn't know myself how much I cared for her till I feared to lose her. Have I lost her, aunt?"

"Why, you don't suppose, Dick, that she'll give you up because she finds that you loved her for herself alone?"

"I don't suppose she thinks about money one way or the other. It isn't that. She wouldn't shrink from poverty, I know; but she would from disgrace; and she might think bankruptcy, even in my circumstances, a disgrace."

"Pooh! she knows no more about such things than a baby. If she believes in you, she'll believe nothing to your discredit; you may be sure of that."

"If I was sure she believed in me!"

"She'll not believe the less in you when she knows that it was only the fear of losing her made you care about the loss of her fortune."

There was silence for a moment or two, broken then by Dick:

"I wish, aunt, you would put me out of pain about this. I can't speak on the subject so soon after Mr. Tuck's death, and yet I can't bear the suspense."

Mrs. Tuck could hardly believe her ears, so strange and strong sounded such language from the usually impassive Dick. It was plain that his was one of those natures whose stillness was due to their depths. Only at rare moments and through a great agitation were those depths disclosed.

So thought Mrs. Tuck as she gazed, amazed and admiring, at her nephew.

"My dear Dick, you might be asking

me to announce to her that the change in her circumstances compelled you to break off the engagement!"

Indeed, this was the mission on which his aunt fully expected to be sent only a few minutes ago.

"It would be the more welcome announcement to her, perhaps," despondently.

"Why, what has come over you, Dick?" cried his aunt, in spite of herself. "You used not to be so diffident."

"Well, aunt, to tell you the truth, I suspect that this cousin has displaced me—or rather, perhaps, that I have never displaced him—in her affections. He is not the less formidable now as the heir."

"He is a great deal less formidable as the heir. How you could know Ida so long, and love her so well, and yet so utterly misunderstand her, I can't conceive. Even suppose this cousin of hers hadn't made himself infamous, do you think such a girl as Ida more likely to prefer him to you now because he is rich and you are poor?"

"I think riches will make a difference, not in her, but in him, aunt. They will give him the courage to propose; and if she prefers him, she will accept him, in spite of his riches."

"Prefer him, after this abominable scandal! Prefer a man who comes forward to say, 'Now that I'm rich you'll be glad to have me,' to a man who says to her, 'When you were rich I hardly dared show my love, because it might be thought interested; but now that you are poor, I need no longer repress or disguise the depth of my devotion to you through fear of misconstruction.'"

It will be seen that Mrs. Tuck was explaining to herself, and rehearsing, the explanation she meant to make to Ida of the contrast between Dick's former apathy and present fervour.

"I couldn't help feeling a little like a fortune-hunter," said Dick, taking the cue, "with all those confounded duns at my heels and at my throat. However, I hope to have done with them soon, once for all, if Ida doesn't mind my being bankrupt."

"I suppose you couldn't plead privilege, as an Irishman, and have your debts paid out of the Funds?" said Mrs. Tuck bitterly, being an Irish Tory.

"It applies only to tenants," grumbled Dick. "If a fellow's only two years in arrears with his landlord, he gets relief and release; but a man may be ten years

in arrear with his tailor" (Dick's own case), "and no one seems to think it a hardship."

"Except the tailor, perhaps," laughed Mrs. Tuck.

HOLY WELLS.

AKIN to the breathless interest with which children are wont to gather round some aged friend who can tell them endless stories of all that befell in those far distant days when father and mother were young, is the fascination with which we, children of older years, seek to gather together traces which may help us to form some idea of the surroundings and motives which influenced our own ancestors in far remote ages.

Many such points of interest cluster around our British wells—those unfailing springs of living waters which, from earliest ages to the present day, have yielded pure, refreshing draughts to successive generations, and so have naturally become centres for many customs born of piety or superstition. From the southernmost shores of Cornwall to the remotest of our western isles, we find such wells still retaining a certain hold on the reverence of the people. Even lone St. Kilda owns three sacred wells, all of which were—certainly till very recent years—honoured with votive offerings of rags, shells, and pebbles; and one of these was reputed to cure deafness.

Almost each of these Hebridean isles has its holy well, dedicated to some very local saint, supposed to be Christian, but more often suggesting plainly that the Christian name is but an adaptation of some earlier pagan dedication. Such are the various wells and streams bearing such names as Tabir-na-Annait, or the Well of Neith, on the little isle of Calligray—Neith or Annait being simply the name of the Celtic goddess of waters. Thus, too, the various wells dedicated to St. Malruba, or Mourie, whose worship was accompanied by exceedingly pagan sacrifices of bulls, with oblations of milk, assuredly suggest pre-Christian days, and it is probable that the same Mourie—"saint or demon," as he is called in the quaint ordinances of the Presbytery in the seventeenth century—gave his name to Tober Mory, the chief town of the Isle of Mull, though, according to modern interpretation, it signifies the Well of Mary, and is accounted most

Christian. Yet there is little doubt that the early Christian teachers wisely appropriated a much earlier popular veneration when they here built a chapel to the Blessed Virgin, and consecrated the well in her honour. I do not know whether this well is still treated with especial honour, but I think it probable that were we to visit it before dawn on the 1st of May—probably reckoned old style—we might see a good many folk, young and old, making their way to drink its waters on this, the old spring festival of their ancestors.

Such is certainly the case at many of the old holy wells in all parts of the country, as, for instance, St. Mary's Well at Culloden, near Inverness; St. Mary's Well at Orton, on Spey-side; St. Mungo's Well, in Huntley; St. Cecilia's Well, near Netherdale, in Aberdeenshire; St. Fergon's Well, near Inverlochry; the Wallack Well, and the Corsmall Well at Glass, in Banffshire; St. Colman's Well, in the parish of Kiltearn in Ross-shire; and a host of others, at all of which sturdy Scotch peasants—strong in their hatred of whatever they suppose to savour of Romish superstition—keep up the old original May morning pilgrimage as carefully as do their Celtic brethren in Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, in all of which the old well worship survives in many places. The correct thing was to walk thrice round the well, then reverently drink of its healing waters, casting in a suitable offering of money, or, if the pilgrimage was made on behalf of a sick person, some portion of his or her dress was left tied to the nearest bush. In these irreverent times, the offerings are of the most meagre sort—sometimes only a crooked pin, a button, or a bawbee.

The wells are now chiefly attractive to young folk, who look forward to this play on the sweet spring morning; but some still come in sober earnest, and bring their sick children, that they may taste the mystic waters, and so be healed of their disease. From St. Mungo's Well, at Huntley, the people carry away bottles of water as a charm against the fairies, who are supposed to hold their revels at the Elfin Croft close by. The Greuze Well, near Dunkeld, is still in much repute for the healing of the sick, as may be judged from the number of rags and scraps of their clothes which are left hanging on bushes and heathery tufts, as a reminder to the spirit of the well—just the very same

custom as I have seen practised at wells, and on mountain passes, and mountain summits, in Ceylon, in the Himalayas, and other remote corners of the world. The progress of the schoolmaster tends to make the people ashamed of seeming to retain any faith in such old customs; nevertheless some undoubtedly still cling to them, and it is not many years since we noticed a girl hiding the cap of a sick baby under a stone at a well on Spey-side. She evidently shrank from observation, but farther in the Highlands of Badenoch there is no such shame, and there are wells for heartache and wells for toothache, and there is no fear lest the guardian spirit should be robbed of the offerings presented by the suppliant, inasmuch as any such sacrilegious act would cause the robber to be afflicted with the particular form of suffering from which the pious donor had been relieved.

Speaking of such holy wells, I may note incidentally that a faith in their virtue is evidently still rife in one great branch of the Christian Church, witness the many thousand reverent pilgrims, mustering an average of upwards of sixty thousand, who annually flock to the Alps of Dauphiny to worship at the shrine of Notre Dame de la Salette beside the Holy Well, said to have sprung from the tears of the Blessed Virgin on the occasion of her miraculous apparition about twenty years ago. It matters little that the story of the pretended miracle was tried in a court of law, and proved to be a glaring imposture. The fame of the Holy Well still waxes greater and greater.

Nor need we look across the Channel for proof that holy wells are still held in reverence. That many of our own countrymen look on prayers offered at special shrines as specially efficacious is evident from the number of devout Welsh Roman Catholics of the upper class, who, on the 27th of July, 1882, went on a pilgrimage to St. Winifred's Well at Holywell to offer prayers for the restoration to health of the infant son of the Duke of Norfolk. The pilgrimage was conducted by the Very Rev. Canon Monghan, and prayers were said at the chapel at Holywell, and also at St. Winifred's Well itself.

Of the many wells held in reverence by our ancestors, none probably has more fully sustained its old reputation than this, which has given its name to the town of Holywell. According to the legend, its waters gushed up within the church of St.

Beuno, at the spot where the head of the holy St. Winifred rested, when, having been cut off by Prince Caradoc, it rolled on till it entered the consecrated building. This miraculous fountain of course became a noted place of pilgrimage. William the Conqueror, Henry the Second, Edward the First, and James the Second, were among the sovereigns who came here to seek pardon for divers sins, and doughty warriors were oftentimes to be seen standing for hours in the well, with only their heads above water, absorbed in fervent prayer and craving the intercession of St. Winifred. Of one brave knight it is recorded that in the earnestness of his devotion he forgot all prudence, and stayed in the chilling water till he was paralysed. His last audible words were "Sancta Winifreda ora pro me," after which he never spoke more.

Cold as the water is, it never freezes, and the flow is always the same. It is said to be the most copious spring in Britain, yielding twenty-one tons of water per minute. This well is the property of the Duke of Westminster, who, in 1876, granted to the Corporation of Holywell a lease of the well for a thousand years, at a rental of one sovereign per annum. A recent visitor to the well took note of some of the votive offerings which had been deposited by grateful patients, and which included thirty-nine crutches, six hand-sticks, a pair of boots, and a hand-hearse.

So early as A.D. 452, the council at Arles decreed that "if in any diocese, any infidel either lighted torches, or worshipped trees, fountains, or stones, he should be found guilty of sacrilege." Evidently the fiat availed nothing, for successive councils again and again repeated the same warning. King Edgar and Canute the Great forbade the barbarous adoration of the sun and moon, fire and fountains, stones and trees. In A.D. 1102, St. Anslem issued commands in London forbidding well-worship, and so late as the seventeenth century, when special efforts were made to extinguish all manner of old heathen superstitions, such as "spells with trees and with stones," an order was issued by the Privy Council expressly with a view to checking well-worship, appointing commissioners to wait at Christ's Well in Menteith on the 1st of May, and seize all who might assemble at the spring, and imprison them in Doune Castle. Yet notwithstanding all these endeavours to stamp out these old paganisms, we find them still lingering

amongst us, and sorely we should regret to see such interesting and innocent survivals swept away.

For instance, what a singular link to prehistoric times are the ceremonies observed—at all events till very recently—at Tullie Beltane, where there are two Druidic circles and a holy well. We may remark that the very name Beltane—Beil-teine—is the old Highland name for the spring festival, and Tulach-Beil-teine means the knoll of the fire of Baal. The regular custom was for the people to meet at the Druidic circles on May morning, and march nine times in procession round the lesser temple, and then nine times round the well.

Here we have practically the same ceremony as is observed at sacred wells in Brittany, as, for instance, at that of St. Anne of Auray, where the worshippers, after making their confession in due form within the church, come forth and walk thrice round the well, and then return to their devotions in the church. From the time of Charlemagne, successive edicts have striven to put down well-worship in France with as little success as in our own land, so the Church deemed it expedient to accept the inevitable, and turned the Pagan custom to Christian use.

In Cornwall there are certain wells to which the people resort, not on May Day, but on the first Sunday in May, bringing sickly children to benefit by the healing waters. Such are St. Madron's Well, and St. Nunn's Well in Pelynt, and to this day the Cornish peasant casts in pebbles or bent pins, and watches their course to learn what may be in store for him and his, very much in the same way as, in the days of Cæsar, the Druids foretold the future by watching the bubbles that rose in these clear waters as they dropped pebbles therein.

To some of the Cornish wells the people make pilgrimage on the first three Wednesdays in May; as, for instance, St. Euny's Well—a clear spring at the foot of a hill called Carn Brea (i.e. the brae of the Carn Fires). Dr. O'Connor mentions having asked a very old man what possible advantage he expected from frequenting such wells as were situated close to old blasted oaks or to some upright, unhewn stone, and what was the meaning of sticking rags on the branches of such trees and spitting on them? His answer, and that of other old men, was, that their ancestors always did it; that it was a preservative against

Gaesa-Draoidact—i.e. the sorceries of the Druids; that their cattle were thereby preserved from infectious diseases; and that the fairies were likewise pleased by this delicate attention.

Some of these Cornish wells are deemed as efficacious for the cure of insanity as those in our own Highlands. Thus, at St. Nunn's, in the parish of Altermun, any unhappy maniac was tossed headlong into the deep pool, and drawn to and fro in the water, backwards and forwards, till he was quite exhausted—a process which was called bousseining or bathing. After this the patient was carried to church, and masses were sung over him. This process was repeated again and again till his feverish lunacy was chilled, either by death or recovery.

Precisely similar was the treatment of lunatics at St. Fillan's Well in Strath Earn in Perthshire, where, till within a very few years, such luckless sufferers received very rough handling. They were thrown from a high rock down into the well, and then, having been led round the chapel, they were locked up for the night in the ruins, being tied securely to an upright stone pillar, which was believed to be an object of far more ancient veneration than the church within which it stood. An average of two hundred patients were annually brought to this well, where "On the witch-elm that shades St. Fillan's spring," were hung the gay rags and scraps of ribbon, wherein the saint was supposed to take delight.

In Wales, the waters of Llandegla were equally famed for the cure of the same mysterious affliction. Here, too, the unhappy patient was thrown into the well and was then left bound for the night in the church, under the communion-table. In this case an offering of poultry was essential. If the patient were a woman, a hen was imprisoned with her; in the case of a man, the victim was a cock, into whom, doubtless, the demon of insanity passed.

On the other hand, some wells possess the awful property of making all who taste their waters mad. Such is the evil fame of the Borgia Well at Cambuslang, near Glasgow. The danger is supposed to lie in a weed which grows in and about the well. Hence the local saying:

A drink of the Borgia, a bite of the weed,
Sets a' the Cam'slang folk wrang in the head.

There are other wells which lend their magic powers to evil. Thus in Denbighshire there is one dedicated to St. Elian,

whence the parish derives its name of Lanellian. Here any malicious person having a spite against another, has only to take a smooth pebble and thereon mark the initials of his victim. Muttering a curse, he drops the pebble into the well, adding a pin as a trifling bribe to St. Elian, who is expected to work mischief in consequence. Occasionally the person cursed, hears some hint of what has been done, and falls sick through fear. Then the well is dredged, and if the pebble can be recovered, the evil is annulled.

Another Welsh well of better repute is that of St. Tegla near Ruthin, in which epileptic patients are taken to bathe after sunset, after which they must each cast a silver coin into the water, and walking thrice round the well, must thrice repeat the Lord's Prayer. According as the patient is male or female, a cock or a hen is then carried round the well, and then round the neighbouring church, which the patient then enters, and having again repeated the prayer, must creep under the altar and there remain till sunrise, when he may depart, having offered a second silver coin. The fowl is left to die in the church as a substitute for the human sufferer.

Of the many Irish wells still in high repute, I may mention the holy well of Tubber Quan near Carrick-on-Suir, where the faithful are wont to resort on the last three Sundays in June, to pray to St. Quan and St. Brogaum, who, if inclined to grant the petitions offered, appear to their worshippers in the form of two wondrously fair trout. The pilgrims undergo divers penances, and finally go thrice round a neighbouring tree on their bare knees; after which, each cuts off a lock of his own hair, and ties it to one of the branches as a charm against headaches. The tree, thus fringed with innumerable locks of human hair of every colour, is a curious object, and is held in the deepest veneration.

At Aghada, in County Cork, there is an oracular well, dedicated to St. John, which, like St. Oswald's Well, and Holywell Dale, in North Lincolnshire, reveals whether an illness will end fatally or not. The friends of the sick man ascertain whether he will or will not recover (at any rate they used to do so) by dipping his shirt in the water, and noticing whether it sank or floated. In either case a strip was torn from the garment, and hung up on the nearest bush, as an acknowledgment for the information thus vouchsafed.

It would be easy to multiply such proofs of the survival of the ancient worship of the goddess of waters by our pagan ancestors. In these prosaic days, such traces of a long-forgotten past have a charm akin to that of the rare visits of the now well-nigh extinct wild birds or animals which haunted British forests in bygone ages, but which to future generations will be known only by tradition.

A CANOE HOLIDAY IN JAPAN.

WE lived an almost amphibious life during the pleasant latter summer and early autumn months, away in the distant European settlement at Yokohama, in Japan. There were cricketers and lawn-tennis players amongst us, but almost every man who could afford it, kept his canoe, or belonged to the rowing club, and whenever he could escape from consular court, office, or store, was afloat in one way or another.

We made canoes and their management a study, and there would be as much excitement in the boat-house of an evening over a new rig, or a new dodge for facilitating manœuvring, or for saving labour, as if the welfare of the settlement depended upon it. Some of us, of course, were "duffers," by which term was meant not only men without any previous experience of canoeing in any shape, but also those whose labours had been confined to river or lake work; but, as everyone could swim, the presence of a "duffer" or two added an element of fun to our expeditions. Upon a summer's evening it was no uncommon sight for half-a-dozen of us to put off, especially if the water was roughish, clad in the slightest attire compatible with decency, paddle out a few yards, jump overboard, and practise the best method of getting in again without capsizing our craft. The principal feature of the annual regatta, next to the international four-oared race between English, Scotch, and Americans, was a canoe race, of which the conditions were: to paddle a quarter of a mile, jump overboard, tug or push the canoes a hundred yards swimming, jump in again, and sail home, so that we attained a certain excellence in the art of canoe manipulation, which considerably reduced the risks we ran when we made long cruises across the squall-swept Mississippi Bay.

Let us accompany the Yokohama Canoe Club upon one of its autumn cruises.

It is an exquisite morning in early October. The sky is of a deep blue; the sun beats strongly down, although it is barely nine o'clock, yet tempered by a gentle breeze which lifts the waves in lazy ripples against the landing-stage of the boat-house, and, perhaps, upon the other side of Mandarin Bluff imparts a livelier motion to the water than the two duffers of our party, who are about to make their first genuine cruise, imagine. There are some twelve of us assembled, clad in the thinnest of zephyr jerseys, white trousers cut away at the knee, and mushroom-shaped sun-hats, for; although it is deliciously cool work here, paddling about on the sloppy boards with bare feet; in an hour's time, when we get out into the open, we shall bless the inventor of sun-hats, and whistle loudly for the smallest breeze to fan our burning cheeks. One of the duffers has brought a light overcoat, which he is stowing away on the seat of his craft. The commodore, a gaunt Scot, nudges the "vice," and the pair indulge in a silent giggle at the duffer's expense.

The finishing touches having been given, running gear seen to work smoothly, rudders made fast, and each man's contribution to the general tiffin stowed away in the hole for'ard termed by courtesy the foc'sle, the commodore gives the word, and we prepare to start. There are all sorts of canoes here—Nautiluses, Argonauts, Rob Roys, Royal Clyde, Royal Liverpool, Americans from Wisconsin, self-constructed canoes, native-built canoes, whether Chinese or Japanese. Canoes with single masts, canoes with two masts, even one with three masts; lateen sails, leg-of-mutton sails, square sails; canoes full of ingenious devices, canoes remarkable for nothing but bare simplicity; ugly canoes, graceful canoes, tubs and feather-weights. Each man indulges his own fancy and taste, without any rule except that he must have a distinguishing flag at the masthead.

Just as we are on the point of shoving off, someone discovers that the doctor is absent. Now a cruise without the doctor would be robbed of half its fun and enjoyment, for he is as well-known a character as any in Yokohama; a rotund, jolly-faced old Etonian, famous for his resemblance to the Duke of Buckingham as depicted by Dryden in *Absalom and Achitophel*:

Was everything by starts and nothing long.

Now absorbed in training ponies for the races, and bringing his thirteen stone of

flesh down to jockey weight; now an enthusiastic walker; now with canoe on the brain; next week absorbed in an entirely different hobby. There is a general feeling of disappointment at this discovery, for it has been no secret that, for some time past, the doctor has been preparing a surprise on the sly for Yokohama in the shape of a canoe constructed from his own plans, and under his personal supervision, which is simply to knock every other canoe in the place out of competition.

But the momentary pang is changed for a wild cry of delight and amusement, as the well-known form appears seated in a huge craft which is quite three times as big as any other canoe on the water, and from its resemblance rather to a fishing-smack than to a canoe is immediately hailed as *The Tub*, although the owner explains that it has just been christened the *Sky Rocket*.

For some moments our efforts to start are paralysed by the immoderate laughter consequent upon the appearance of this *Triton* among the minnows; but time is slipping on, and we want to get to our destination upon the opposite shore of Mississippi Bay before the sun gains his full strength, so the commodore gives the word, and off we paddle, for there is not enough breeze to warrant our setting sail.

Away we go in an irregular procession, along by the Bund Wall, wherefrom a few British marines give us a cheer; past the Creek Mouth, the French Hospital, the Pacific Mail Wharf, the picturesque bluff dotted with bungalows, until we arrive at the shaggy, wooded promontory known as Mandarin Bluff.

"Look out, you fellows, to make sail!" sings out the commodore to the duffers. As we round the bluff we feel the fresh breeze sweeping in from the Bay of Yedo; there is a general shipping of paddles, and at another shout from the commodore the bare masts are clothed with glittering white raiment, and the canoes seem to take a new lease of life.

"This is easy work," says duffer number one to duffer number two; "I thought there was going to be some fun and excitement." We are skirting the fishing-village of Homoko, of which the picturesque brown-thatched cottages, and the urchins sprawling on the white sand amidst heaps of cordage and timber, are plainly visible to our right. These words have scarcely left the duffer's lips, when he stops short, his

canoe gently cants over, and he is deposited head over heels in about a foot of water. In the supreme enjoyment of a fellow-creature's distress, duffer number two pays no attention to his own steering, and follows suit.

The fact is that the shore just here runs out almost level for nearly a mile. Our commodore knows this, as do all the old hands, but he prefers to let duffers "gang their ain gait," and learn a profitable lesson thereby.

"Take in your sail!" he roars. It's all very well to sing out "Take in your sail," think the submerged duffers, but it is another thing to do it, with your legs entangled in the gear of the mast and the tiller-ropes wound tightly round your arms, your mast and sail under water, your sun-hat floating off in one direction and your paddle in another.

However, after much splashing, and groping, and ill-use of the Queen's English, the masts are unshipped, the canoes floated and baled out, the flotsam and jetsam gathered together, and the duffers get under weigh again.

"I vote we stick to Mac," says one duffer to the other.

"Stick to Mac!" retorts the other; "that sounds very good advice, but for us to stick to a fellow who handles his craft like a pony, and who's all over the shop just when and where he likes, is another thing. You can try if you like, but I shall go straight ahead, and take my chance."

It is glorious work this, skimming along before this fresh breeze, now riding on the crest of a dark-blue wave, now darting like an arrow down the valley on the other side of it; the sail bulging out like a balloon and protecting us from the sun rays, which are now striking down almost perpendicularly. There is no danger out here, and it is plain-sailing, so we light our pipes, lean back contentedly on our seats, and would not exchange positions with the poor folk grilling in the settlement for something. But the feeling of swift motion and complete independence does not entirely fill the cup of our enjoyment. We get such a view from our position as cannot be obtained from any point on shore.

Far away on our right hand the blue shore trends away into glimmering indistinctness, but the air is so clear that on the nearest point, some three miles away, we can make out here and there amidst the dense wood, the red roof of a rustic shrine

and the brown cluster of a village. Beyond all rises the pure white cone of the Sacred Mountain, like some grand, sublime, solitary monarch; so clear that it seems to be carved in marble against the deep-blue sky behind, with no mountains around it to detract from its graceful height. What wonder that every son of Nippon, from Hakodadi to Nagasaki, regards it as his own personal property—carves it, paints it, worships it, sings its praises, extols it as the wonder of the world, calls it by a hundred endearing epithets, and until of recent years, deemed it so sacred as not to be polluted by the presence of women, much less of foreigners. It is the first object that greets the eye of the European on his way to the land of his pleasant exile, and the last that lingers to remind him of it on his homeward journey.

Straight ahead of us is the irregular picturesque outline of the coast to which we are bound, a land rich in pleasant villages hidden away amidst wooded hills and fertile valleys, in quaint old temples, in the undisturbed romance of long ages. To the left glitters the bay, beyond which are faintly visible the mountains of the mysterious province of Sagami.

Another half-hour's sailing brings us within a quarter of a mile of land, and the commodore sings out: "Now for a race-in! First man has the first pull of beer!" Sheets are tautened, odd extra sails of all shapes and sizes are clapped on, and the frail craft literally leap over the waves, the commodore leading, and The Tub close behind, the duffers a long way astern, one paddling and the other tacking all over the place. We all struggle in somehow; the canoes ground on the firm white sand, are hauled up high and dry, and the commodore absorbs the prize beer. Let us look round.

It is indeed a fairylike spot—a small track of sandy beach between two cliffs covered with dense foliage, amidst which glisten the giant camellia, the blood-red azalea, the rhododendron, the purple iris, the yellow "icho," and the hundred other gaudy blossoms which make the flora of Japan perhaps the richest in the world.

The foliage—dark pine and fairy bamboo for the greater part—descends to the water, wherein it is faithfully and clearly reflected as in a picture. Amidst a break in the darkness dashes a cascade of fresh cold spring-water on to the beach, and its pleasant sound mingles harmoniously with the chatter and chirping of the birds,

disturbed by the unusual invasion of strangers.

In front of us is the temple, a brown-timbered, brown-thatched, tumble-down old place, erected in years long gone by in honour of Ben-Zaiten, or Benten, the Goddess of the Sea, approached by a flight of moss-grown steps, at the foot of which are two curiously-carved stone lanterns, and the inevitable stone "torii," or bird-rest of the Buddhists. Far away behind stretch woods, and a village is said to be somewhere near, but as yet its inhabitants have not turned out to examine us.

The old priest, upon whose solitary life here the occasional visits of foreigners break like those of angels, greets us at the foot of the steps, salaaming and smiling as if he were wound up by clock-work. He is filthily dirty and very ugly, but he is interesting as being one of the few depositaries near Yokohama of the genuine old Japanese folk-lore and legends. He was here when Yokohama was but a straggling fisher-village; he can talk of the old days when the cavalcades of the great lords used to swagger in all their pomp and pride along the Tocaïdo, and everyone was obliged to make obeisance under penalty of receiving a slashing cut from the Muramasa blade of a retainer; when there were no foreigners in the land but a few wretched Dutchmen cooped up on the island of Desima near Nagasaki.

When the first exploring party of Europeans landed at Tomioka—such is the name of this bit of beach—the poor old fellow fled into the woods, for the popular creed then was that foreigners made their ordinary meals off priests; but further visits restored his confidence, and he not only finds that the "Tojin Baka"—beasts of invaders—are very pleasant and harmless, but that their visits are a considerable source of revenue to him, and a vast saving in larger expenses, as they invariably bring more food with them than they can possibly eat.

It is too hot in the open for tiffin, so the contents of the various "foc'sles" are transported to the temple, the mats of which are very soon littered with cold joints, cold pies, tins of preserved soup and meat, piles of bread, pots of jam, and a goodly array of bottles containing British beer and strong waters.

Then with one accord we make a rush for the beach, divest ourselves of all our clothing but our sun-hats, and amidst the wondering exclamations of a small crowd

of natives who are astonished at the whiteness of our skins, plunge into the deep, cool, blue waters for a refreshing swim. This is delicious, and only the cravings of hunger induce us to leave the water and sit on the sand to dry ourselves in the sun. Then we squat in a circle round the viands, which are heaped together in a common banquet, the old priest dances about opening bottles as fast as he can, and we fall to.

There is not much talking at first, the business in hand is far too serious, and the old priest probably ceases to wonder that Englishmen are physically so superior to his own countrymen when he notes the amount of solid food which we twelve men contrive to put away in the course of half an hour. When the first edge is taken off his appetite, the doctor proceeds to explain to us the secrets of The Tub, and is not in the smallest degree disconcerted by our constant explosions of irreverent laughter at his comic gravity and earnestness. In fact, he says that the present Sky Rocket is nothing to the one which he has upon the stocks of his mind's eye.

Then, the repast finished, and the old priest seated in a corner in front of the remains of a round of beef, half a pigeon-pie, a loaf or two of bread, and an array of bottles in various stages of partial consumption, we abandon ourselves to the pleasures of tobacco. No man who has ever made one of those cruises with the Yokohama Canoe Club can ever forget these ecstatic moments of post-prandial rest. The soft mats, the music of the breeze through the bits of glass suspended to the roof, the whisper of the trees, the blue sea in front, the blue sky above, the brilliant gaiety of all around, the perfect independence and ease, all go to fill up a picture, the memory of which in after-life is always tinged with a thought of sadness that the chances are ten thousand to one against its being presented again.

The pipe smoked, we betake ourselves to various pastimes. Some of us gather round the old priest, who is rapidly becoming voluble and familiar under the combined influences of beef and beer, and make him spin yarns of old Japan, or induce him to show us some of his sacred mysteries in the shape of books and wall scrolls. Our artist wanders away through the woods in search of "bits," and he finds plenty to choose from—brown urchins grouped around a house-door; an old wife spinning homely blue garments at her house front; a wayside shrine amidst bamboo branches;

a pedlar displaying his wares to a group of laughing damsels; a couple of pilgrims clad in dusky white, with tinkling bells and long staves, on their road to the Holy Mountain.

Others improvise a game of cricket with paddles as bats, a couple of bamboo stems as wickets, and a fishing-net cork for a ball. Others again hold athletic sports, and tire themselves out with high and long jumping, and putting the stone. One great Devonshire man managed to put it through the temple roof. Our laughter and chatter ring out strangely at this quiet, sequestered spot, and how that pale, almond-eyed goddess can squat there in her gilded shrine with the shouting and noise of a dozen exuberant young Englishmen about her, without sending a tidal-wave or a typhoon to engulf us, is a question seriously mooted, and quieted by the suggestion that the old priest does ample penance for us after our departure.

And so the pleasant afternoon is whiled away, until the sun begins to sink behind the cone of Fusi-yama, and the commodore suggests that preparations be made for a start.

So the old priest receives his present of food and drink and money, the children are sent off delighted to their homes, each with an empty bottle, and amidst a volley of "Sayonaras" we shove off, and start on our homeward voyage.

The wind has gone down with the sun, so we are obliged to have recourse to paddles, hence not much in the way of episode or adventure marks our return journey.

The commodore strikes up a wild Scottish croon which he calls a song, but which has nothing in common with a song but chorus, and our voices echo weirdly over this dark, moonlit expanse of water. The little Yokoska steamer speeds through our midst, and her passengers give us a round of cheers, and in two hours and a half from the time of embarkation we glide alongside the boat-house. The canoes are given over to the care of the "sendoes," and we go our different ways unanimously declaring that we have had a glorious trip.

Perhaps new fashions and new influences have been at work during the ten years which have elapsed since this cruise was made; perhaps a new generation prefers lawn-tennis and promenading in the public gardens to the old-fashioned pastimes. However that may be, all who can remember the cruises of the Yokohama Canoe

Club must look back to them as amongst the pleasantest experiences of a life so full of pleasure, that it can scarcely be realised in after years when the conditions of life are changed.

BLACKTHORN.

SHE sleeps! Ah, welcome spell of rest
To tired hands and brain oppressed!

Her morning task is done,
With what a soft pathetic grace
The chill March sunbeams kiss her face,
My poor work-wearied one!

I sit me softly by her side,
A little space I may abide,
To watch her breathing free;
Ah me! the thin, care-sharpened cheek,
The sunken brows, the dumbly speak
Of all she shares with me!

I wooed her from the lap of wealth,
While strong in youth, and proud of health,
I thought the world my own;
And she, sweet soul, put lightly by
The gauds that charm the worldly eye,
And lived for me alone.

I look upon her sleeping face,
And by her pallid cheek I place
A tiny blackthorn spray;
Meet symbol of her joyless life,
For we are conquered in the strife,
Are beaten in the fray.

The roses of this lower world
Were not for us, the wild winds hurled
Afar our hopes' young buds;
And grim misfortune's sullen tide
Swamped all life's landscape far and wide,
Like February floods.

Ah, trusting heart! too true to me,
Ah, tender wife! 'tis hard for thee,
This round of labour done:
The blackthorn's leafless pearly spray,
Instead of rosy-clustered may,
And cloud instead of sun.

What! wakest thou to hear my moan?
Ah, darling, in thy tender tone
Lies life's best music yet;
Though worldly ways are closed to me,
God gave me all in giving thee,
My heart hath no regret.

Take thou this little blackthorn spray
I plucked upon my homeward way,
It doth us comfort bring;
Though hope has failed, true love survives,
The "blackthorn winter" of our lives
Leads to eternal spring!

VIRGINIA.

A STORY.

LOOKING down from a high window in the Piazza di Spagna, in Rome, one sees all sorts of figures and all sorts of doings.

There was not much shade anywhere. The sun reigned high in his mid-day glory and the time of the year was May.

A little valley of shade filled the bit of street which led up to the Pincio, but being mid-day, there were only some boys at play there on the white, dusty ground.

Over the way some balconies were shrinking away into the strip of shade which just swept down the faces of the houses there. Some English girls stood out—who but English would stand bare-headed, even in the shadow, of a May noon?

They were looking down, and they saw the boys at play, and they saw the two gaily-painted stands, under which there were the girls selling fresh lemons, and where clear water was always running over the marble slabs, suggesting coolness and refreshment. There were two young priests sauntering down the street of the Propaganda, and there were the high, broad steps, the Spanish steps, leading up to the chapel where the nuns sing—or are said to sing—so sweetly; there were big hotels, with all the green outer blinds shut fast, and there was the circulating-library at the corner, with its rows of books and its rows of photographs showing themselves beneath the wide awning.

There was a string of the little hackney-carriages that are such a godsend to hard-working tourists; their drivers asleep in them. The very dogs, shaved and pink-skinned, lay with their four legs all stretched out in the utmost incapacity of laziness. Sleep and dreams ruled the hour.

Yet there were some people who worked even at mid-day in Rome.

Coming down from the Pincio, three oblong moving whitenesses made the bit of dark, shady street look like one of the black-and-white diamond-paved floors of the churches.

Three pairs of white-stockinged feet showed forth; a little white curly dog ran out into the glare of white sunlight; three girls followed him, carrying on their heads the oblong shallow baskets in which the laundresses of Rome send the snowy linen home.

"In?" No; "on." The clothes are daintily packed on the huge basket-trays, and are balanced on girls' heads.

"Do they ever get spilt?" you ask.

Never—never. The girls are as light as roes; with their brown, bare hands on their hips, and with their limbs free and their heads firmly erect, how can they slip? They never dream of such weakness.

"I have been six times to the Londra to-day," said one girl, Nita. "And very likely a load to carry back now."

"You are grand! The less you say about the washing you do the better,"

retorted the second, a shortish girl. "How much do you rub?"

She was a square-looking girl. Her elbows were square, her shoulders were square, her brown, swarthy face was broad and square—she was not pretty, neither did she seem to be good-tempered.

"You are too curious," and the third girl laughed merrily. She was just the opposite of Maria, or Mariuccia, as they called her; she was as lovely as the other was plain, she was tall and erect, with a graceful, free step, and her face would one day, when she grew older, be surely the grandly-featured face that one expects a Roman woman to have. Now she was only a young girl, and her face was delicate in outline, the glad lips were apart and gay, and her dark eyes laughed. "Yes, that is it," she repeated; "you are too curious. The mother and I, we send the clothes home white, and we iron them well; we make all the pretty embroidery and the lace look nice—never you mind the rubbing."

"Just like you! All for show!" said Mariuccia crossly. "Get out of my way, you stupid dog!" and one foot went out with a jerk towards the white gambolling dog.

"You would kick my Lili!" cried Virginia. "I hate you—I hate you!" and with one long, swift step she put her tall strong self between the girl and the little dog. An Italian is quick and fiery. Virginia could laugh—nay, she was far more ready to laugh than to scold, but her tongue was sharp too, and could sting. "Lili is an angel!" she hurried on; "but I can make her bite you, so take care!"

"Can you? I don't believe it. Lili is just the same meek incapable as her master—yes, don't you think I know who gave her to you!"

"You—"

"Tonio Bucci gave her——" began the first girl, Nita.

"As if I did not know, the foolish man! Truly he is as soft as the milk he sells."

"The milk is sour for thee—eh, Mariuccia?" and Nita nudged the girl's arm. "I wouldn't show I was angry."

There is some good advice that stings one more sharply than a taunt, and of this sort was this counsel of Nita's.

"Angry? I'm not angry. I'm thankful to anyone who'll take such an insipidity out of my way."

But Mariuccia's face flushed red, and

seeing the unlucky Lili come before her just at this moment, the ready foot struck out again with the undisguised intent of administering a kick.

This time the aim was sure, and Lili with a squeal darted sideways with her bushy white tail between her legs.

Nita was a step in the rear, Virginia had sailed majestically ahead and aloof from the others—was she not too proud to condescend to listen to such rude speeches as Mariuccia had been making?

So they were moving leisurely across the piazza when Lili got her kick. Now in the first agony of bodily pain the most patient ignores the difference between friend and foe—Lili ran from Mariuccia, but it was to dash full tilt against her mistress's feet.

It was all done in a second.

The frightened dash—the entanglement of feet and of dog—the flutter and splutter of Lili's soft body and furry, whisking tail, a sharp short bark, and alas! the basket on Virginia's head was down, and all the dainty folded linen was flying over the dusty sun-scorched pavement! Fair embroideries and gossamer laces, all so clear, and white, and fresh, were spoiled. Spoiled irrevocably! How could they be saved from the griminess of the fine dust?

"Lucky it's you and not me!" sneered Mariuccia. "I shouldn't dare to take such things to the hotel. They'll do for your signore; for people in the pensione it is not so bad."

"You think so?" retorted Virginia. "What do you know? My signore need have better treatment than your always-moving strangers. Have I not had them all the winter? Nay, for two winters? And are they not good to us? Ahimè! Ahimè!" she threw her arms aloft, and then with her sharp cry she let them fall, and swing on each side of her. "Do they not start this very night on the long journey to their home? What can I do? Santa Maria! would I not rather spoil all the clothes for all the week than these of my dear signore?"

"Bah! there's no harm done if they go away to-night. You can't lose trade, anyway."

Virginia, crying and kneeling amidst her ruins, took no heed.

"That's your honesty!" shouted Nita with disgust. "One sees now why you never get beyond hotel-work. People would not send to you twice. Go! Leave me and Virginia!" She turned her back on

Mariuccia, and carefully set her own basket in safety. "Pick them up. There, shake them a bit!"

"It is no use! it is no use!" wailed Virginia. "And on the day of all others when I would have them lovely. Ah, they were beautiful when the mother and I finished them!"

"They are not so bad."

"Don't you speak—there!" and she held up a garment whose lace was decorated with irregular streaks and patches of yellow dirt. In a second it was thrown on the top of the pile Nita had deftly set back in order. "Will I stand ashamed before my signore, and take such things to them? No, never. I shall take them all home again and wash them afresh."

"You? This afternoon?" and Nita stood apart, looking amazed.

"It must be. I will tell Tonio afterwards; he will understand."

Nita nodded her head quickly.

"Probably," she said with meaning. "You remember Mariuccia will be there, too. She will make him understand with a vengeance."

"Do I fear Mariuccia?" proudly said Virginia.

The English girls on their balcony saw the accident, but their minds were full of other thoughts; they did not notice that the unlucky girl was Virginia, a protégée of theirs, and as to thinking of the safety of the clothes, they were full of the excitement of going home after a winter in Rome. For a second they had turned to speak to someone within the room, and when their eyes again fell on the piazza it was to see two Italian friends of theirs crossing from the shadowy opposite street towards their own house.

The May evening was falling cool and soft. All the world had been out. What streams of people were driving along the Corso and round the Pincio! How the gay band tossed its fanfare of operatic airs and its voluptuous waltzes on the brilliant air; how the brightly-dressed nurses, with their grand muslin aprons and streamers, sauntered about with the white babies; how pleasantly and graciously did the Queen bow and smile as she made her daily visit to her loyal people!

The two Nelson girls and their mother were strolling about, too. Their Italian friends were with them, and one can easily imagine the sort of talk that would every now and again come up; the English

people were going away, and the friends would not see them for six months. Nay, who knew? Perhaps one girl would not come to Rome the next winter.

This one was a wild girl; she said things as they came into her head. She was declaring, with a little flourish of her hand: "Is there any place I love as I love Rome? Should I not die if I were to dream that never again should I set my devoted eyes upon it?"

"Signorina, you jest. Is it not true that before next winter——"

"I shall be Mrs. Brown? Yes. That supposition may certainly have become a fact; still, you may imagine the aforesaid Mrs. Brown weeping her eyes out when her family pack the family-trunks next October for Rome!"

"Gwen, there goes Virginia, and we shall miss her."

"Where—how?" and Gwen turned to right and left.

"Behind you now—half-way down the road."

"What is she doing up here?"

"Don't know. There is some merry-making going on down below, beyond the Borghese Gardens. I caught my lady looking that way——"

"I shall simply go home. No, Signor Para—no, I want no escort. I am bent on domestic duties, and you would only be in the way."

She went off, and she overtook Virginia, and she heard the story of the misfortune that morning.

"But how could you do all that work again this afternoon? Was not your brother Tito to be married this morning? Were you not to have a beautiful festa this afternoon?" So said Gwen, in her headlong fashion.

"It is true, signorina. But could I behave so badly to you and to the signora? No."

"Well! don't be wretched over it now. Get back quickly."

With a few more words the two girls parted. They understood many little things of each other's lives, from the simple fact that each one had a little love-story lying behind the common ways and works of every day.

Alas, and alas! It was a black day for Virginia; she never divined how the thing was done, it was done and past remedy. Of course the hard, cruel fate did not swoop down upon her all at once, but she noted that day as the day when Tonio Bucci fell away from her.

She had no redress. What do we say? She never sought for redress. A Roman girl is proud, she would never sue for love, she would hold her head erect and look down stoically and in silence upon the faithless lover, whose steps went daily farther and farther from her. She and her mother lived alone, they came in time to hold themselves apart from the other women.

And who was Virginia's rival?

Mariuccia, who pretended once that she despised Antonio!

Nita, Virginia's friend, flicked her thumbs at Mariuccia, and cried: "Bah! That Mariuccia loves, or does not love, as the humour comes. Bucci will have his master's shop soon. If Bucci had not gold he might whistle for Mariuccia."

"Serve him right if a richer man crosses his path," dryly put in a woman who heard her.

"That is your way. It is not mine," said Nita. "I have promised a candle to the Santissima Madre if she get them well married before Corpus Domini."

"You! That is your friendship—eh? You'd reward a poltroon, a base fellow?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Mariuccia a reward? That is good," and Nita laughed again.

Some two or three weeks after this, the whole of Rome seemed flocking into St. Peter's. It was the great festival of Corpus Domini, and the grand procession came filing in through the mighty columns, and in at the vast door. Incense perfumed the warm air; hundreds of priests gravely walked along carrying the treasures. Scarlet-robed cardinals officiated; mitred dignitaries, in vestments of gorgeous silver tissues, chanted and genuflected before the high altar; strings of blue, and of green, and of scarlet-coated young seminarists from the various colleges made lines of clear colour in the dense crowd, which by itself was just a moving mass of radiant colour.

On the edge of the crowd was a group—a marriage group all in festa dress. What voluminous skirts, what gold earrings, what lace kerchiefs! The bride was short and square; she pulled at her newly-made husband's sleeve, so that she might see over the heads of the people. Of course he helped her, but methinks he remembered a tall girl, whose bearing was proud and stately, and whom any man—yes, any man—would have felt it a glory to call his wife. That girl would have seen well by his side, without giving him that irritating pull. Tonio Bucci, of course, was this newly-made husband.

The summer burnt itself out, and autumn wist too—the sickly, pestiferous Roman autumn, which brings the heavy fever air from the Campagna, and which feeds the dreaded enemy by the damps and the rains of the falling year.

That time went, and real winter, the winter which makes Rome full of foreign visitors, had come. Many amongst these were people who came every year, people from colder lands of the north, who see that life is better worth living under the genial Italian sun.

Gwen did not come, but her mother and sister did. A few weeks passed, and then Gwen herself was in Rome again. She was now a glad young wife, and she and her husband having been far afield into Eastern lands for their long honeymoon, were taking a glimpse of Rome on their way back to England.

She had to ask after five hundred people, to use a comfortable exaggeration, but in the interests of our story we will make no mention of the four hundred and ninety-nine, and just pick out one of her old friends, Virginia Caldi.

"Not married!" cried Gwen. "What went wrong?"

She heard the story.

"I know that Mariuccia. I saw her more than once with Virginia. The man must have been conjured out of himself."

"You let Virginia infect you with her own mad admiration of him," answered May, Gwen's sister.

"Not at all so. I saw for myself. Did I not see him often enough out at the Caldis' cottage? He repents it by this time."

"I don't know about repentance. He may have repented, but now there is no knowing what he feels. He is a free man. Mariuccia is dead."

"Mariuccia dead!"

May nodded her head.

"She was self-willed—as self-willed as an English girl," I was told, and she went out in the wet and cold; she died of fever. Yes, that was it. And now——" The girl was silent a moment.

"Well—now?" echoed Gwen.

"Now Bucci is tearing his hair—that is an elegant metaphor, of course, as you know his head just owns a stubble and no more—well, tearing his hair at the feet of Virginia."

"Then it will be all right; she always did love him."

"I know nothing about that, I leave all that to you. She'll have nothing to say to him, anyhow. Old Madame Caldi exists in

a flood of tears, for Virginia declares she will go and serve the nuns at St. Trinita dei Monti. She'll be a nun herself if she can."

"Nonsense!"

"True, nevertheless."

Wherewith Gwen resolved upon becoming a matchmaker, as it has been said that all good women are, and she carried her husband off for a walk. The walk took them out a long way beyond the Porta del Popolo, and, in fact, only ended at Virginia's cottage.

This is what came of that visit.

Only a week after, Gwen and her husband had to leave Rome, and on the morning of the day they left, Virginia, as of old, brought her basket-load of daintily got-up linen home.

"You do not look like a nun," began Gwen half teasingly.

"Oh, signora, that is not a thing to laugh at. No, not at all." The girl lifted her tall figure with that simple pride of hers which had still such a grand dignity in it. "No, no; and, signora," she seized Gwen's hands in her own with all the fiery earnestness of an Italian; "if you had not come to me, I should be there now. Yes, this would have been the day when I should have left the mother, and Tonio, and all."

"But if your vocation is there—there with the nuns," Gwen's eyes tried to look grave. "Suppose one day you find you would rather be singing with the good sisters than cooking Tonio's soup?"

"Signora! Is that possible?" and Virginia dropping her friend's hands clasped her own. "Shall I ever think that?—I?"

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

HEREFORDSHIRE.

IN entering Herefordshire, we come upon a kind of English Rhineland, a county of bright, swift rivers, of sunny hills and fertile valleys, of castled crags, and towers of robber knights. Instead of the vineyards we have orchards far more beautiful, and sparkling cider takes the place of the costly wines of Rudesheim or Marco-brunner. Pity it seems that no poet or novelist has arisen to throw the glamour of romance over this rich and charming county where every stream has its legend, and every castle its story, and where the varied life-streams of Roman and Briton, of Saxon and Norman, have met and mingled, sometimes in peace, and sometimes in war, and have left a rich drift of

custom and folk-lore that still awaits adequate exposition. Of historic sites and places, which have made their mark in English annals, there is no lack in this rich border county.

A few miles from Ludlow brings us to the ancient castle of Wigmore, once a semi-royal seat, which might have vied with proud Windsor in its extent and state. A few ruined walls and towers are all that remain of former grandeur, but the site is a fine one, commanding a great expanse of country, and the lines of the ancient enceinte are still to be traced. From Wigmore Castle rode out proud Mortimer with a clump of lances in his train, when stout Earl Simon ruled the land in the name of King Henry the Third, while Prince Edward was his prisoner, held in careless captivity at Widmarsh by Hereford. There had been going and coming among the monks, between Abbey Dore in the golden valley and Wigmore Priory that nestled beneath the castle of the Mortimers, and thus it was that the movements of the Prince and Lord Mortimer were accurately timed, for Edward that day went a hunting with his guards, and led the chase northwards, till presently, on the brow of a hill, he espied the glitter of steel and the gay pennons of Mortimer and his knights. That night the Prince supped at Wigmore Castle, and soon after was at the head of a powerful army, of which Mortimer's vassals from Shropshire and Herefordshire formed a powerful contingent. Roger Mortimer was one of the three commanders at Evesham, where Earl Simon was slain, and from that time the house of Mortimer was loaded with honours and lordships. Roger's son married a kinswoman of Edward's Queen, a beautiful Castilian maid, and brought her home to his stately home at Wigmore. And the son of this pair, with royal blood in his veins—the royalty strangely mixed of Wales and Normandy and Castile—may have felt the crown of England within his grasp, but missed his hold, and came to his bitter end on Tyburn-tree.

Wigmore, however, with the earldom of March, or of the Marches of Wales, was restored to the descendants of the attainted Mortimer, and again, by a marriage with a daughter of the Plantagenets, the crown of England almost fell to the lords of Wigmore. Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, had been long acknowledged the heir-presumptive to his cousin Richard, when Bolingbroke snatched the crown from the hands of the feeble king.

Mortimer retired to Wigmore, leaving his children as hostages in the hands of the new king. Soon after, Owen Glendwr raised the national standard in Wales, and coming down from the mountains with his wild Welshmen, began to lay waste the English land. With the hastily-gathered county levies, the men of Weobley and Leominster, Mortimer fell suddenly upon Owen, as the Welshmen were fording the river Arrow, between Pembury and Eardisland, at a point where the river divided into many branches; but, although taken at a disadvantage, and fighting up to their waists in water, the hardy Welsh put the Herefordshire men to flight and made a prisoner of Mortimer.

When all athwart there came
A post from Wales laden with heavy news,
Whose worst was that the noble Mortimer,
Leading the men of Herefordshire to fight
Against the irregular and wild Glendower,
Was by the rude hands of the Welshmen taken.

Some may share the suspicion manifested by King Henry, according to Shakespeare, as to the bona fides of Mortimer's battle, and declare, with him, "he never did encounter with Glendower," and that his captivity in Wales was a skilful device for escaping the dangers of his position; and Percy's testimony as to the conflict "on gentle Severn's sedgy bank," the Severn being a long way from the actual scene of the encounter, whether sham or real, was, perhaps deservedly, received with polite incredulity. The well-known story of the conspiracy that was afterwards brewed between Percy, Glendwr, and Mortimer, with its ending at the battle of Shrewsbury, has already been alluded to. But it seems that even after this crushing blow, Glendwr and Mortimer, who had married his daughter, still held out against the English king. And soon after Shrewsbury battle, a Welsh army took the field, reinforced by French auxiliaries—for the French were in the plot against Henry, and landed a considerable force in Wales to help Glendwr. The army encamped near Leominster, on Ivington Hill, where their entrenchments are still to be seen; and Prince Henry, coming against them with his English levies, did not venture to attack the position; but dissensions broke out, as a matter of course, among the Welsh chiefs, and their army melted away without having fought a battle.

It was in these Welsh wars that a stout Herefordshire knight, Sir John Oldcastle, afterwards better known in the south as Lord Cobham, from his marriage with the

heiress of Cobham, attracted the notice of young Prince Hal. Sir John was probably born at Almeley Castle, of which a grass-covered mound is the only relic, and stories of early freaks with the wild prince may have furnished the groundwork for Shakespeare's wonderful picture of Sir John Falstaff. But it was the old knight of popular and unfriendly tradition that Shakespeare drew, for the Lollard martyr was as brave and true a man as ever wore knightly belt, however wide in its girth that belt may have been. From Oldcastle's influence in encouraging and protecting the Lollards, Herefordshire became an early stronghold of the new faith.

There is still, however, something more to be said of the Mortimers, although the fate of the last lineal representatives of the race is obscure. But the air of Windsor seems to have been fatal to the young scions of the stock, and Edmund died a refugee rather than a prisoner in Wales, or perhaps concealed by some faithful retainer not far from his own splendid castle of Wigmore. Eventually the castle and estates came to the house of York by the marriage of their chief with Edmund Mortimer's sister and heiress, and thus Wigmore became a semi-royal seat, and in the troubled times that preceded the Wars of the Roses, a secure retreat for the princes of the house of York.

It was to Wigmore that Edward, the future king, retired when the crushing defeat of Wakefield and the death of his father seemed to have extinguished the chances of the Yorkists. And here he rallied the tenants of his estates and the personal adherents of the house of York. Margaret, hurrying southwards to secure London and the Tower, detached a force under Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, to hold out a hand to the Welshmen, who by this time had become chiefly Lancastrian in their sympathies, and having joined the Welsh levies, to crush the pretender Edward in the ruins of his castle. Edward, however, did not wait for the blow to fall, but marched out from Wigmore with all the men he could muster, chiefly the men of Ludlow and Shrewsbury. Hardly four miles had Edward marched, when the forces of the Lancastrians were descried drawn up by the banks of the pleasant river Lugg. Mortimer's Cross is a hamlet where sundry cross-roads meet, and where no doubt the piety of the Mortimers had caused a wayside cross to be erected, such as are still to be met with

at most of the Norman carrefours—the object of rural processions, where at sunset, during Lent, the women of the village assemble and sing the litanies of the Virgin. Close by the cross is the great Westfield, an open plain sloping down to the river. The two armies joined battle in the misty sunshine of a frosty February day. The bulk of the Lancastrian troops were Welsh and Irish, whose fierce, wild rush was borne back by the phalanx of English lances. The English bowmen did the rest, and soon the half-clad warriors were flying for the hills. The chiefs, encumbered with their armour, were unable or ashamed to share the flight of their followers, and many Welshmen of note were slain or taken prisoners. Among these last was old Owen Tudor, whose comely face had long ago captured the heart of the queen-dowager of England. His son, Jasper of Pembroke, and his grandson Henry, afterwards to be king, escaped in the confusion, and made their way through the heart of Wales, and sailed for Brittany. But Owen was taken to Hereford, and there beheaded, with many other of his countrymen. As the day declined upon the field of slaughter, men noted with awe and wonder the appearance of three suns in the firmament above, a portent of high encouragement to the victors, but one that filled the superstitious Welshmen with dismay.

Edward's success, however, was eventually fatal to Wigmore, which, after figuring as a royal residence in the reign of Edward the Fourth, was left to fall to ruin and decay by his successors.

Some of the possessions of the Mortimers in the end fell into the hands of the all-grasping Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, and when, on the death of Edward the Sixth, the duke attempted to place his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, upon the throne, the strong Protestant feeling in the county—originally instilled by Oldcastle, the portly knight, it will be remembered—drew together a considerable armed force to support the Protestant succession, in the person of Lady Jane. These forces assembled on the brow of a hill called Courtenah, that slopes down to the little river Pinsley, about a mile west of Leominster, and not far from Glendwr's Camp. Here the army entrenched itself, and awaited the orders of their chiefs in London. But as time went on, and no news came from the duke, who was, indeed, already a prisoner in the Tower, the force gradually

melted away, and the loyal men of Leominster, who had an inkling of which way things were going, sallied out with the confidence of men who are on the winning side, and dispersed the remnant. Whereupon much honour and profit accrued to the brave burgesses of Leominster.

Leominster itself, although it owes its name to an old monastic settlement, has not much to show for its ancient minster, unless some Norman parts of the old parish church are a portion of the more recent building. But the old Saxon minster that Merewald built, the father of the sainted lady of Much Wenlock, was thoroughly destroyed by the Danes, assisted by the Welsh, who were always ready to sink their Christianity to harry the Saxon, and who, in a talent for destructiveness, seem to have taken the lead even of the Danes; their joint efforts, anyhow, have left even the site uncertain.

From Leominster, road, rail, and river—the latter with many pleasant windings through a rich and charming country—lead towards the county town of Hereford, that lies in a fold of the Wye, here hurrying smoothly down from the distant hills of Wales. The early town was at Kenchester, a Roman station of some importance, a few miles westwards, which the local tradition describes as destroyed by an earthquake. The Welsh called the place *Trefawydd* from the fir-trees that grew about it. When Kenchester was abandoned, a new settlement grew up at a convenient ford on the River Wye, which the Welsh knew as *Henfordd*, or the old road; probably the British trackway here crossed the river before the Romans built a bridge higher up, and when that bridge was destroyed in the earthquake, or more probably by wild Welshmen, the traffic necessarily reverted to the old way. The Saxons seem to have played upon the Welsh name of the place and converted it into Hereford, or the army ford, perhaps in memory of the memorable raid when the Danish "here," or host, destroyed Leominster. But the place itself is an ancient walled city, that was probably in existence long before the Danish invasion, and if we may hazard a conjecture, was likely enough originally a colony of Romano-British refugees, founded under the protection of one of the Welsh princes.

We have been accustomed to speak of the British population as driven before the Anglo-Saxons into Wales, and although recent researches have thrown a doubt

upon the thoroughness of this sweeping-away process, yet no doubt there must have been a considerable number of the proud and haughty Celtic population who would prefer a life of poverty and exile among men of a kindred race, to remaining in servitude with their enemies. But it must be remembered that Wales was already occupied by stubborn and warlike tribes, tenacious of their territorial rights, each tribesman entitled to his free tillage of common land, and to follow the chase wherever he listed. There was a warmth of national feeling that ensured safety and hospitality to men of a kindred race; but it is evident that the new comers could not be admitted to the privileges of the free tribesman. They became especially the care of the chiefs and princes, who settling them here and there on the waste lands of the community, exacted a certain share of the produce as rent. The burdens of the community—chiefly, in those rude times, the support of the princes and chiefs, their dogs, their hunting train—were thrown upon these communities of aliens, whom the Norman lawyers, by a sort of false analogy, classed as villains. But as well as the agricultural wanderers who found a home on the Welsh hillsides, there must have been a number of immigrants, artisans, and craftsmen from the ruined Roman towns, for whom there was no fixed place in the Celtic organisation. And these people may be looked for in the border towns such as Hereford, settled under the direct protection of the prince of the country. We have the peculiar customs of the city to confirm our conjecture.

Thus, to quote briefly from Domesday Book, we find that in the time of King Edward the Confessor, there were a hundred and three tenants settled within and without walls. Every entire masure—the plot of ground allotted to each citizen—paid sevenpence-halfpenny and fourpence towards hiring horses, while the tenants did personal service of reaping three days in August, and of gathering hay one day, as the sheriff might appoint. Whoever had a horse went three times a year with the sheriff to the county and hundred courts at *Urmlaia*. When the king went to hunt, one person went from each house to the stand or station in the wood. Other tenants, not having entire masures, found three men to guard the king when he came into the city. Any one leaving the city might sell his masure to another who would do proper service, but the bailiff

had the third penny. When a burgess died serving in the army with his horse, the king had the horse and arms, or, if he served without a horse, ten shillings or his land and houses. If anyone had not devised his property before his death, the king had the stock belonging to his land. Every man whose wife brewed either within or without the city paid tenpence. Six smiths paid every one a penny for his forge, and made a hundred and twenty nails from the king's iron. Each received threepence by custom, and these smiths were free from all other service. Then there were seven moneyers, who had the privilege of coining, a staff which shows comparatively greater circulation of wealth than at present. For these moneyers were master workmen, with a considerable following, over whom they had full jurisdiction; with the curious provision that if the moneyer died intestate all he had went to the king.

Some have seen in these curious penalties upon intestacy, and the so-called heriots due at the death of a burgess, evidence of Danish occupation, for with the Danes, who were practically an army in possession of a hostile country, naturally enough, when a soldier died, his horse and arms were restored to the common arsenal. But there is no other trace of Danish settlement in this valley of the Wye, and it is more probable that we have here just a survival of Welsh jurisprudence as to the alien, who having no inherent rights could transmit none to his descendants, while the power of disposing of his goods by will was one that he had acquired under the influence of the Church, whose interests had to this extent reversed the ancient Celtic polity.

In all this we have something quite different from the free cities of Teutonic origin; but the continuance of the Celtic customs shows that the city must have passed without any shock or catastrophe from the rule of the British prince to that of the Saxon king. And in the same quiet way the city passed from Saxon to Norman dominion. Nothing was changed for the burgesses of Hereford, for the smiths, for the moneyers—nothing except the name of their over-lord, about which probably they did not much trouble themselves. And the same may be said of the county generally, which submitted quietly to William, and paid its customary rents in honey and produce without any disturbance.

One change indeed the Normans probably made. They must have introduced cider. Re-introduced it, perhaps, for the use of cider must have been as well known in Roman Britain as it was in Roman Gaul. But the Saxons, with their love of strong, heady drinks, had neglected the cultivation of the apple; while many of the new settlers in the valley of the Wye came from the Pays de Caux, where the culture of the apple and the making of cider has been practised from time immemorial, and here in this beautiful cultured county the apple-trees perhaps still flourish that were grafted from the Norman rennet.

The beauty of the country is curiously commemorated in historic nomenclature, for in the old Celtic speech it was called Epyllwyg, meaning the fair and open country; and the Romans, hearing that its inhabitants called themselves the men of Epyllwyg, travestied the name into Silures, which, if it has no particular meaning, is much easier to spell. And the fair open country of Hereford and Monmouth is the ancient Siluria, the name of which the geologists have carried to the uttermost parts of the earth. Hereabouts fought Caractacus, and any one of these knolls crowned with ancient earthworks may have witnessed the last struggles of a gallant race.

Perhaps we may find some trace of the Silures in Archenfield, one of the most interesting regions of the west, a district that forms an irregular peninsula enclosed by a wide bend of the Wye and the tributary streams of Dore and Monnow. In the time of the Confessor, Ergyng, as the district was then called, perhaps originally Argwyn, or the beautiful country, was inhabited by a population half Welsh and half Saxon, dwelling together in amity, and with peculiar laws and customs. Although mainly Welsh in origin, these people were loyal to the English rule, and claimed as their privilege the right of forming the van of the royal army in its advance upon Wales, and the rear when the army retired. Here, again, in this out-of-the-way district, the Conquest made little difference, and the people retained their customs and language to a very late period. Long after the rest of England owned the supremacy of the royal justice, in Archenfield murder might be commuted for a fine, and personal retaliation was allowed and even enjoined on the injured. And yet in Archenfield Christianity must have existed almost from the days of the Apostles. Saint Dubritius, indeed, is

credited with the conversion of the district, at the end of the fifth, or the beginning of the sixth century; a saint who is sometimes called primate of Wales, and who is said to have crowned King Arthur. And here in Archenfield is the very stone on which the great Prince was crowned, close by Moccas on the Wye, which forms the extreme northward apex of the district. The dedication of sundry of the churches in the district to the saint, noticeably Hentland Church, near Ross, which is anglicised from "Henllan," meaning the old church, seems to confirm the tradition.

The chief fortress of this district is Goodrich Castle, which crowns a red sandstone cliff in one of the charming bends of the Wye; while a modern antique castle, Goodrich Court, occupies an adjacent height. The ruins of the castle are of great interest, although its history as a fortress is confined to the solitary episode of a siege in the Civil War. The towers command a magnificent view of the noble basin of the Wye, with the Malvern Hills on one side and the Black Mountains on the other, and the skirts of our British Black Forest. Goodrich itself is noted for its connection with the family of Jonathan Swift, whose grandfather was rector of the parish, a militant parson who delighted in vexing the souls and harassing the bodies of the Puritans.

His devotion to King Charles was shown by his visit to the king when, poor and almost deserted, he took refuge in Raglan Castle after the battle of Naseby. "I have brought my coat for the king," cried the enthusiastic parson, taking off his outer garment. The governor of the castle remarked with a supercilious glance that he did not think it was worth much. "Then take my waistcoat, too," cried the parson, stripping off that also, when the chink of broad pieces—three hundred of them, sewn within the lining—ensured the loyal parson a heartier welcome. But when we hear of his placing infernal machines in a ford of the river which the Parliamentary cavalry have to cross, by means of which some thirty troopers are unhorsed and drowned, we may charitably hope that the dean who tells the story was drawing that long bow which he knew so well how to manage.

From Goodrich we may sail by many a pleasant reach of the winding Wye till we ask with the poet:

Who taught that heaven-directed spire to rise?
The man of Ross, each lisping babe replies.

Pope was staying at Pengethy when he

wrote *The Man of Ross*, and but for this we should never have heard of this local benefactor; nay, probably the walks he laid out and the open spaces he adorned would all ere this have been annexed by neighbouring proprietors but for the guardianship of the poem. Coleridge, it is less generally known, visited Ross, and wrote a fragmentary eulogy upon John Kyrle, of which the following lines have a sad personal interest:

But if like mine through life's distressful scene
Lonely and sad thy pilgrimage hath been,
And if thy breast with heart-sick anguish fraught
Thou journeyed onward tempest-tossed in thought,
Here cheat thy cares!

From the neighbourhood of Ross we may explore the green slopes of the Malvern Hills, with their ancient camps and earthworks, and their relics of pre-historic man. Pre-eminent among these lies Herefordshire Beacon, a strong fort of a primitive people, a city of refuge for the pastoral people of the valleys, for their flocks and herds, and all their belongings. A triple ditch and triple mounds enclose a space of forty-three acres in extent, while from the central beacon, the fiery warning or appeal for help spreads its rays to farthest Gwent and to the hills of distant Powys. About the skirts of this old British city, ancient superstition clings, and wild stories are current as if some terrible catastrophe or slaughter had left a curse about the place. Awful is the accursed shadow of Raggedstone Hill that every living creature avoids. Tradition has it, that while Wolsey, the future cardinal, lived at Morton Court, where he was tutor or domestic chaplain with the Nanfans, he once upon a time fell into a deep slumber while poring over a book in the garden of the old moated mansion. When the young man awoke he discovered to his horror that he was overcast by the accursed shadow. From that moment, and all through his wonderful career, Wolsey, it is said, was in his heart convinced that he should come to no good end, and when he fell, he felt that the curse long delayed had come upon him at last. A recent author has brought forward a long list of instances in which during the course of centuries the old superstition has been verified; among the most recent of these, Mr. Huskisson, his brilliant career suddenly cut short at the opening of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway, the first victim of the new iron age, but slain by the curse that came down from dim antiquity; for he in his youth had unwittingly fallen under the shadow of Raggedstone Hill.

As to the origin of the curse, it is popularly attributed to a wicked monk of Little Malvern, who, having had to crawl to the top of the hill on hands and knees by way of penance, is said in his rage and malevolence to have cursed the shadow of it wherever it should fall. But this explanation is rightly judged by the author already quoted to be scarcely adequate, and he suggests, as the scene does, some ancient scene of slaughter, of the Druids perhaps, or of some primitive tribe, where the victims, driven over the crest of the ridge to perish, turned to curse their murderers; a scene to be paralleled in recent days among the rocks of the Arabian desert where it is said that Palmer turned at bay before he was cast over the precipice and cursed his murderers and betrayers.

Then there is Bransill Castle almost within range of the fatal shadow, a fifteenth century castellated mansion, once belonging to the Beauchamps, with the remains of a more ancient tower in a deep glen. The place is full of legendary terrors, with a tribe of family ghosts, to exorcise whom the only charm was said to be a box of the family bones.

Then there is the quaint little ancient town of Ledbury lying on the flank of the Malvern Hills, with memories of its old decayed manufactures that began Heaven knows when, but that have come peacefully to an end without much damage, as if all the inhabitants had made a snug little competence out of them, and then let them drop as not sufficiently genteel. A nice little town it is indeed, with quaint old houses in brick and timber, and a fine old timber market-house—if it be still standing—where there is talk of cider and perry, of hops and malt. All about here the Bishop of Hereford formerly held sway; the town was his, and his the lordship of the Malvern Hills, till you come to a ridge which forms the boundary of his jurisdiction, where there was a trench cut that is still visible, and called the Duke of Gloucester's ditch, the said Gloucester being a certain earl who flourished in the reign of Edward the First.

GERALD.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

CHAPTER IX. HELEN'S HOUSE.

THEO looked out from her high window at that stormy sunset. She saw it through and over a veil of lurid smoke, which made

strange effects of colour quite new to her eyes.

Mr. Goodall's house stood on high ground, facing west; in front of it there was a kind of small park with trees; then came the village of Woodcote, in which old thatched cottages, some of them half-timbered, were mixed with ugly rows of new red brick. The high road ran down to the north of Woodcote House, and through the chief part of the village. Lower in the valley it passed by Mr. Goodall's great pottery works, on the way to Mainley, which lay to the north again. All the broad valley which lay west of Woodcote was traversed by the railway, and one colliery succeeded another along its length; there were brick-works, too, adding their sulphur smoke to the blackness which disfigured a once pretty country.

Theo's window, in the new and highest part of Mr. Goodall's house, had a view across this valley to hills far distant; but beyond the railway, between her and them, there ran a green ridge with a line of Scotch firs and a group of poplars at the end of them, and more trees that seemed to cluster round buildings; beyond these the setting sun certainly caught some roofs of houses.

Helen had apologised for the smoke that was to be seen from her cousin's window—John had planted trees, but they were not yet grown tall enough to hide it. Theo said the smoke was rather beautiful, and she liked to see it; at which Helen laughed amiably.

Theo was very happy that evening. She had hardly known what it was to be cheerful all the summer, since the sad afternoon of the wedding, when Hugh took her away to his father's deathbed. Colonel North had lingered on a few days after that, but he was either unconscious or in great pain; and after he died Theo's only course had been to go straight to her grandmother. Certainly the time spent with poor Lady Redcliff had been neither peace nor rest.

It was pleasant to be with Helen again—dear soft old Nell, always, in her lazy way, affectionate and comforting, and quite unchanged by her eccentric step of marrying John Goodall. It was amusing to see her perfect content with the worthy man she had chosen, her seeming unconsciousness of his defects, her placid satisfaction with everything, except the smoke, that surrounded her. The house was most successful. The furniture was, perhaps, a

little too smart and new, too great a contrast with the old distinguished shabbiness of Linwood. This was a difficult point, and Mr. Goodall would not have allowed dogs in the house, even if Helen had cared for them, which she did not.

"You and I must scratch and tear about a little, Theo," said Helen. "We shall soon make the things look a little worn and nice. You may forget sometimes, and let Wool come in, when John isn't here to drive him out. John doesn't quite understand, you see; he thinks things ought always to be new."

But this, and a few other such small differences, seemed to be the only things that ruffled Helen's serenity. The outside of her house was not by any means disagreeably new. It was large, and built of red brick. Part of it might have been a hundred years old, but all the best rooms had been added by Mr. Goodall a few years ago, and most of the front was covered with climbing roses and clematis. A flight of white steps, with a fine glaring balustrade, was the ugliest and most pretentious thing about it; but the garden, with old trees in it, sloped prettily down to the park, and the flowers were splendid; the greenhouses, as well as the yards and stables, would have done credit to a much larger place. Altogether, many people might have thought Helen a fortunate woman.

Helen was delighted, for her part, to have her cousin with her again. She had thought of her at intervals all through the summer. It was true that she had not written to her much, but Colonel North's death had been a kind of separation, just as his illness all that last winter had been. Helen had always respected Uncle Henry, but she knew very well that he had never cared for her. This did not trouble her, but it made it difficult to sympathise heartily enough with Theo's grief at the loss of him.

Then John was a difficulty. He had begun his married life, like other mistaken men, by taking an immense interest in his wife's smallest concerns; and, therefore, of course, in her correspondence. He thought it a duty and privilege to read all her letters. This bored Helen a little; she had not been quite prepared for such absolute possession. It did not really make much difference to her, for she hated writing, and had no intimate friend but Theo; but the worst of it was that John, reading Theo's very unconventional letters, became rather prejudiced against her. He

thought Theo gave herself airs, and that Helen need not ask her to stay with them just yet. Before his marriage he had been meek and respectful about Theo, but this good state of mind had passed away.

Helen did not trouble herself to contradict him much, or to resent these opinions of his. She was really very fond of him in her way, and quite appreciated his devotion to herself. She therefore dropped the subject of her friend Theo, till one day Hugh North's letter came, giving such a melancholy account of her.

This brought out all the kindness and good-nature for which John Goodall had been given credit by his new relations. He was going to London on business, and he himself proposed that he should go to Lady Redcliff's, and bring Theo away with him.

"And it's no use doing things by halves," said he. "When you have got her, you had better keep her a good long time."

Helen smiled on him with great approval, and so he had carried out his plan, with satisfaction to himself and pity for Theo, which was much increased by his interview with her grandmother.

It was nearly a year since the two friends had seen much of each other, and they seemed to be back in that happy old time—that time when Theo's freer life had sometimes been a subject of secret envy to Helen, who was getting tired of the rule of her stepmother. No Mr. Goodall had appeared on the scene then.

After all, Theo saw, and she was not sorry to confess it, that her cousin was contented. Helen said she was happy, but some one has said that those who have never seen happiness may pass through life mistaking content for it. Perhaps this depends on their own characters; perhaps natures like Helen's are not deep enough to hold happiness if it comes to them.

Helen came downstairs again late that night, leaving Theo in her room, and found her husband, who did not smoke, still sitting in the drawing-room. He was reading, but he laid down his book and was quite ready to welcome her. He wanted to tell her all that he had been doing in London; it was a new thing to have his wife's attention taken away from him, and he had not enjoyed that evening much, and was a little inclined to regret all he had so generously said about "a long visit;" but Helen knew how to drive these selfish thoughts away, for John was very much in love with her still.

"Well, you have got your friend, so I

hope you are contented," he said at last, when he had given her a full account of his adventures.

"Quite contented, thank you," said Helen with a yawn. "Isn't she handsome?"

"Very, I suppose, in her own style; but she is gone off since the wedding."

"Well, a little thinner; but she has had a good deal of bother, you know, and she looked better than usual that day. She is a most excellent creature, John. How she puts up with that awful grandmother of hers is a mystery to me."

"She is awful," said John in a slightly lowered tone, as if Lady Redcliff might have come in at the door. "But somehow, do you think there is any likeness——"

"Likeness between my Theo and that horrid old woman!" exclaimed his wife. "My dear boy, you are out of your mind."

"No; I'll soon tell you what I mean. Your cousin is not of a meek disposition."

"She is tremendously generous and forgiving, and has not a shadow of conceit."

"Ah! but she is not meek—there is no humility about her."

"I don't know that. She thinks less of herself than I do."

"I am not disputing the fact that she is a perfect character," said John with a grave smile. "But if you will let me finish what I was saying——"

"Make haste; I'm very sleepy."

"Yes; I was going to say that I saw no signs of her giving in to Lady Redcliff. I should say that she made life bearable by holding her own, and having her own way, and I think that in strength of will, positiveness, and so on, she is probably a match for her grandmother. A good thing too. A manageable young woman would be miserable, cowed, a mere slave, in the hands of an old witch like that."

"Oh, as to that, nobody except Uncle Henry could ever manage Theo, and that was just because she was fond of him."

"I thought so. She would be difficult to manage," said Mr. Goodall. "And as she is fond of you, perhaps you will be able to keep her from making friends with these Fanes."

"Don't torment yourself about that," said Helen serenely. "I see nothing so dreadful, after all, in her trying to help the girl."

"Nor should I, if I liked the connection."

"Connection!" said Helen, making a little face. "Well, now you do frighten me. Your young Fane certainly did admire her very much at the wedding—but it was not my fault that he came, remember."

"I quite acknowledge that it was mine," said John, reddening up to his hair. "But look here, Helen, if you see the remotest possibility, your cousin had better go back to her grandmother at once. We must run no risks of that kind."

"You really are actually frightened," said Helen. "My dear, if Mr. Fane chose to be such an idiot, he might as well cry for the moon. The man doesn't exist who is good enough for Theo. Can you look at her face and not see how proud she is, how she would scorn any poor whipper-snapper who dared—— One thing, John, please remember—never make a joke on that subject to her. If she understood you she would be very angry."

Mr. Goodall smiled.

"Well, I don't think Fane is a fool," he said, "and she has not much money, which makes it safer, for they are a scheming lot, I suspect. I'm sorry, though, that she has made acquaintance with them. You had better not let it go any farther. I don't want you to go and see them, and she will hardly go by herself, I imagine."

"I can't say what she may do," said Helen.

"I was put out by the sight of those two fellows," he went on after a pause, "and I said one or two things about Litton which I rather regret now. I have no proof of anything against him, and it is unbusinesslike to put one's suspicions into words, as I did to your cousin to-day. I said something about Litton's having been generous with other people's money. It would not do for that to come to his ears—you understand," he said, looking at Helen anxiously.

"What do you mean?" she said, yawning.

"Would it be as well to say to your cousin—in case she should meet Miss Fane again——"

"What enormous caution!" said Helen. "Speak to her if you like, but I am sure she has forgotten every word you said long ago. And if she remembers it, she is neither wicked nor foolish enough to repeat it."

"Ah, ladies don't always think what they are saying, but I dare say you are right," said the excellent John, a little disconcerted.

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